

## In Memoriam

### **Janet (Lippman) Abu-Lughod** **1928-2013**

JANET (LIPPMAN) ABU-LUGHOD WAS AN AMERICAN SOCIOLOGIST WHO MADE major contributions to urban sociology and world systems theory. A prolific writer, she authored thirteen books, several monographs, and scores of scholarly articles. She held long-term appointments at Northwestern University and the New School for Social Research and received two lifetime achievement awards from the American Sociological Association. Abu-Lughod made significant contributions to scholarship on the Middle East through her groundbreaking studies of Cairo (1971) and Rabat (1980), numerous articles on urbanization, architecture, migration, decolonization, and imperialism in the Arab World; critiques of academic Eurocentrism and Orientalist notions of an Islamic city; meticulous documentation of the demographic transformation of Palestine and the Zionist colonial project; and as an editorial board member of *Arab Studies Quarterly* and the *International Journal of Middle East Studies*. In partnership with her husband of forty years, the renowned Palestinian political scientist Ibrahim Abu-Lughod, she worked on developing the Palestinian Open University, a project whose fate was sealed when the Israelis invaded Lebanon in 1982.

This was about the time I met Janet, who became my scholarly mentor, role model, and lifetime friend. She taught me a sociology of precision and contextualization, one that was comparative, historical, compassionate, and centered on social justice. During our first meeting to discuss my interest in Arab immigrants she politely yet circumspectly told me to “go out and collect some data” and come back in a month. It was clear that she was not going to waste her time on anything that was not serious and astute, on her terms. I soon encountered Chicago’s large, diverse, and politically mobilized Palestinian community. A riveting Marcel Khalife concert celebrating Palestinian culture, liberation struggle, and the strength of resistance organizations in Lebanon was the first community event I attended.

Three months later the Israelis invaded Lebanon. On a long-planned road trip at the time, I observed people across the country watching with awe the illuminated night bombings of Lebanon. I vividly remember calling Janet from a remote pay phone in the Arizona desert, asking her if I should come back. She replied, "Honey, you don't need to rush back, there will be many more like this." How sad and how true! Yet for me, a corner, one that Janet had nurtured, had been turned. No longer able to be among others who did not feel pain, I returned early. I also began understanding just how alienating it felt to be a Palestinian in the United States. While Janet ached from her husband Ibrahim being trapped under the Israeli siege of Beirut, she posted Palestinian narratives and casualty reports daily on the sociology department bulletin board, to the chagrin of most of her colleagues. Janet and I began marching together in frequent demonstrations as she enacted the notion that scholarship and activism must go hand in hand.

Meanwhile, the dissertation research progressed. Janet the demographer drove me to consult original sources (including the technical appendices) for immigration and census data, because one must know how categories are defined and because definitions change. Janet the transnational feminist scholar encouraged me to pay special attention to the lives of women and said that I must go to Palestine because I could not understand here without understanding there. Janet the antiracist and anti-imperialist scholar guided my thinking that connected the Zionist project to everyday life on 63<sup>rd</sup> Street for Palestinians in Chicago.

Janet warned me that I would never get an academic job if I persisted in this research project. Academia was unkind to Palestinians, and Arabs more generally, and the gatekeepers were many. She relentlessly took them on, as a scholar and an activist, as she also fought against sexism and racism. I, on the other hand, for an extended period of time abandoned a book contract and the academy for the world of social justice activism. Janet's support for me throughout those years was unwavering. At some points she was my only touchstone to academia. Her fierce loyalty meant everything to me and she became one of the most important persons in my life. I might not have returned were it not for her consistent affirmation of both sides of who I was, a scholar and an activist. My life was truly shaped and honored by her presence, as were sociology and the lives of many others. Janet is survived by four children: Lila, Mariam, Deena, and Jawad, eight grandchildren, and three great grandchildren. ✨

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